United Nations A/C.2/54/SR.35

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
23 November 1999

Original: English

Second Committee

Summary record of the 35th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 9 November 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Brauzzi (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Italy)
later: Mr. Niculescu (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Romania)

Contents

Agenda item 100: Environment and sustainable development

(f) Implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States *(continued)*

Agenda item 102: Training and research

Agenda item 103: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

99-82265 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti), Mr. Brauzzi (Italy), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 100: Environment and sustainable development (A/C.2/54/L.23)

(f) Implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*)

Draft resolution on the implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/C.2/54/L.23)

1. **Ms. Critchlow** (Guyana), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, drew particular attention to paragraphs 2, 3, 6 and 7, which called on the Secretary-General, Governments, United Nations bodies and other organizations to ensure the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Agenda item 102: Training and research (A/54/390, 480 and 481)

2. **Mr. Boisard** (Director-General of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research) said that it appeared from the reflections of the Board of Trustees on development and possible reformatting of UNITAR (A/54/390, annex), that there should be no change in the nature of the Institute's programmes, the diversity and eclecticism of which showed that the Institute could respond flexibly and effectively to specific requirements, to the satisfaction of their recipients. The Secretary-General's report (A/54/480), meanwhile, showed that the survey carried out by the Institute had, despite its deliberately restricted aims and minimalist approach, been most useful.

3. The Institute's restructuring phase had taken some seven years and the consolidation phase was likely to be as quick. It would not necessarily be easier but it should produce tangible results, ultimately producing a body of skills and credible training expertise within the Organization, drawing on the latest theories and technologies.

4. The facts were impressive. Over 120 programmes took place every year, benefiting 4,000 people on five continents. A third were concerned with diplomatic training, mostly in New York and Geneva, while the rest aimed to strengthen institutional capacities for economic and social development, usually in cooperation with various individual ministries of the countries concerned.

5. Much had been written about the speed of change and the difficulties with funding for development, particularly through official development assistance. An element of donor fatigue had become evident, along with reluctance on the part of recipients to meet conditionality requirements. Almost all agreed that a new approach should be adopted, in part based on multilateral assistance; and training, which aimed to strengthen institutions by improving individual skills, should be a cornerstone of that approach. Multilateral cooperation would remain extremely important and the Institute would act as a stimulus to thought and a catalyst for action.

6. Outlining the conceptual framework within which the Institute's activities were prepared and developed, he said that training could well be the essential challenge of the twenty-first century. It was an extremely complex process at both the individual and the collective level: theory and practice had to be tailored to existing situations, and the trainer had to structure programmes as flexibly and pragmatically as possible in order to meet the needs of the beneficiary States. Training also required very close cooperation between the teacher and the taught. The Institute would, of course, make its contribution to what was an immense task. The difficulty would lie not so much in obtaining official development assistance as in generating ideas and proposals for operational activities. Training must be totally integrated with theory and action at every level if real change was to occur.

7. The Institute's training programme was developed around four basic principles, the first being the direct involvement of as many partners as possible. The "national profile" concept, originally developed for the waste management training programme, had been adopted by over 80 States, including at least seven of the industrialized member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Decision makers in the countries concerned had been encouraged to assess their own institutional structures, set priorities for their improvement and draw up a national plan of action. Partnership networks had therefore developed both within each State and within the United Nations system and, subsequently, between the State and the United Nations.

8. The second principle was cooperation with national and regional institutions. For example, training on the legal aspects of debt and financial management in much of Africa had been set up in cooperation — administrative, material and even financial — with five specialized African

institutions. Similarly, training programmes on climate change drawn up jointly with three subregional specialized institutions in Africa, Latin America and the Pacific region had been followed by interregional cooperation. Material prepared in Spanish in Central America had been tested and validated in French in Africa and then introduced in English in the Pacific region. The process involved real cooperation and resulted in considerable cost reductions.

9. The third principle concerned the use of the new information and communication technologies as much as possible. The recently launched information society and development programme contained various training modules on the technical, economic, legal and social aspects of the information society and a CD-ROM had been produced. The ambition was to make the Institute an encyclopaedia of Internet knowledge and development for use by experts in developing countries. The Institute had also developed its information and environmental monitoring systems, combining the Internet with Geographical Information Systems, and introduced it with great success in French-speaking Africa. The Institute had also helped to set up an excellent urban information system in Dakar.

10. The fourth principle concerned the preparation and dissemination of original and innovative educational material for use by UNITAR trainees. Some was put on the Internet and thereby reached a much larger audience.

11. It was most encouraging that all the various programmes had been carried out in close cooperation with other United Nations bodies, not through the usual channels of coordination but spontaneously, in response to specific requirements. Inter-agency cooperation had been one of the main elements of the Institute's policies during its restructuring phase and would become even more so in the future.

12. Finally, he said that although the Institute would be ending the financial year with a surplus for the second year in a row, it would be a mistake to infer that it was no longer in financial difficulties. Currently, it could respond to no more than 20 per cent of requests, even in cases where the need for training was urgent. Despite repeated appeals from the General Assembly, the industrialized States were dragging their feet over voluntary contributions. With one exception, the States that had decided to resume assistance over the past two years were all developing countries.

13. **Mr. Machin** (Director of the United Nations Staff College), introducing his progress report (A/54/481), said that over the past year the College had undertaken a full review of its activities with a view to establishing its unique niche in training matters. It was now in a position to design activities that would change and improve performance throughout the United Nations system.

14. The mission of the College was to facilitate strategic change by supporting the evolving vision of a new United Nations and by building on the talents of all its staff. The evolving vision was crucial, because organizations were never static. Only by learning to manage its own changing role could the Staff College help others in the United Nations system manage theirs. That was no easy task, for it required a considerable change in cultures. Building on the talents of staff was also important, since the development of human resources was vital in helping an organization become more relevant, competitive and effective. The aim of the College was to create a more cohesive system-wide management culture, built on a solid competency base horizontally, so that all agency activities could be coordinated.

15. The Staff College, the Institute and the University had different mandates and met different training and research needs. Nevertheless, their activities were complementary and the College was working with both organizations to find ways of strengthening their complementarity and their collaboration.

16. The cost of putting the College on a secure financial footing required minimal resources from the United Nations; some $2 million to $3 million a year to finance core staff and training costs was a modest investment given that the aim was to contribute to a more effective United Nations which better met the needs of Member States.

17. **Mr. Kamal** (Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research), reporting on the recent special session of the Board of Trustees, said that the Board had conducted a comprehensive review of the Institute's activities and had concluded that the Institute's restructuring phase had been completed successfully and that the focus should now be shifted to consolidation of the reform process. During that phase, the Institute would concentrate on evolving better evaluation methods and effective follow-up mechanisms. In addition, it could seek to extend its geographical reach by arranging training events at some additional sites, such as the cities hosting the United Nations regional economic commissions, adopt a much stronger policy for the use of information and communication technologies, and expanding its interaction with universities. Finally, it could gradually expand the research components of existing programmes.

18. The Board had emphasized the need for continuity at the management level during the consolidation phase. Accordingly, it believed that the Executive Director's

contract should be extended for at least another year and that the post should be upgraded.

19. No institution could maintain its activities without adequate and predictable funds, yet UNITAR was completely dependent on voluntary financing. As long as the Institute's core values were not compromised, an active policy of fund-raising from all other possible sources, including foundations and the private sector, should be followed. He appealed to Member States to make substantial contributions to the Institute's General Fund. The Institute's financial situation could also be improved by reducing its expenditure on rents and maintenance services. While the Institute provided free training services to all participants, including the United Nations Secretariat, it was charged rent for its office in New York as well as for maintenance of its office in Geneva. The Board felt strongly that both services should be made cost-free. He urged Member States to call on the Secretary-General to report on progress made in the implementation of paragraph 12 of General Assembly resolution 53/195.

20. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the reflections of the Board of Trustees (A/54/390, annex) offered not only a positive view of the Institute's current work, but also a progressive framework for its operations in the future. It was especially heartening to hear that over 70 per cent of the Institute's activities took place in developing countries, where their impact on the development of those countries could be maximized.

21. In that regard, the Group of 77 and China supported the Board's recommendation to extend the geographical reach of UNITAR. It also supported the argument put forward by the Board (A/54/390 para. 12) regarding the Institute's role in an era of declining official development assistance and underscored the point made in paragraph 13, namely, that among the largest beneficiaries were some of the richest Member States, many of which did not contribute to UNITAR. All parties should contribute more vigorously to the goals and objectives of UNITAR and, as the Board suggested, fund-raising efforts should extend to the private sector and to foundations.

22. The Group of 77 and China welcomed the Institute's commitment to strengthening inter-agency cooperation in the promotion of training and research activities, as evidenced by the many cooperative ventures it had undertaken with other institutions within and outside the United Nations. That approach should be further extended to the regional and national levels. In addition, the continued adaptation of UNITAR to changing realities, and its incorporation of new techniques and technologies in the delivery of its programmes, would allow it to remain relevant and responsive to the times.

23. The positive gains made by UNITAR should be continued on an expanded basis. Capacity-building remained the cornerstone of the development of Member States and every effort that fulfilled that critical function should receive strongest support from both developing and developed countries. In that context, the Group of 77 and China supported the Secretary-General's conclusions regarding future policy directions as outlined in section V of document A/54/480. It also supported the work of the United Nations Staff College, and noted that the redefinition of the College's strategic directions and focus should make it more responsive to the needs of international civil servants and of the United Nations in a rapidly changing global environment.

24. **Mr. Kääriänen** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, said that, while the European Union welcomed the numerous examples of UNITAR cooperation with other United Nations bodies offering training activities indicated in the Secretary-General's report, it would have liked to see a more systematic identification of such partnerships. A greater degree of analysis with respect to the various partnerships, and the financial and other gains achieved through increased cooperation, would have been beneficial. A comprehensive overview of existing partnerships, together with an identification of the overall training requirements and areas of duplication across the United Nations system, would pave the way for a coordinated delivery of training between the various institutions.

25. Referring to part III of the Secretary-General's report (A/54/480), the European Union felt that the concept of a broader survey to include the full range of training initiatives being undertaken by the United Nations system merited serious consideration. Such a survey should identify specific training requirements as well as the most efficient and effective means of delivering such training, including the identification of the optimal organization for each training effort.

26. The European Union supported the current emphasis on capacity-building activities as well as the recommendation by the Board of Trustees to better evaluate the long-term impact of training activities on institutional transformation. The report of the Board had revealed that among the largest beneficiaries of UNITAR were some of

the richest Member States, many of which were not contributing financially to UNITAR at all. That was an issue of concern, given that the Institute should be targeting its programmes to the specific needs of developing countries and countries in transition. The Union concurred with the Board about the importance of a strong policy for the use of new information and communication technologies. In designing such a policy, the needs and constraints of all Member States, particularly the least developed countries, should be fully taken into account so as to ensure that the use of new technologies did not exclude any country or institution from training opportunities due to a lack of proper equipment or knowledge.

27. The European Union also concurred with the Board's views on the funding of UNITAR. The Institute's focus should remain on developing countries regardless of the new sources of funding. At the same time, an active policy of fund-raising and partnerships with the private sector and foundations would be welcome. The European Union encouraged the Secretary-General to do his utmost to implement the provisions of paragraph 12 of General Assembly resolution 53/195.

28. To avoid duplication of efforts, a clear division of labour between UNITAR, the United Nations University and the United Nations Staff College was crucial. At the same time, there were areas where the three institutions could work together to build on their respective strengths. In that respect, the European Union supported the coordination efforts between the governing bodies of the three institutions and, where feasible, encouraged further cooperation in the form of joint programmes to ensure complementarity. The European Union also welcomed the note by the Secretary-General on the progress report by the Director of the United Nations Staff College (A/54/481), in particular paragraph 36 thereof.

29. **Mr. Babar** (Pakistan), said that the training activities offered by UNITAR had enhanced the capacity of Member States to effectively contribute to the activities of the United Nations. He agreed with most of the observations concerning the survey conducted by UNITAR contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/480). The proposal to extend the survey to include the training activities of the entire United Nations system deserved serious consideration. The survey might be expanded to focus on four major objectives, namely, addressing the problems of proliferation and fragmentation of training facilities; avoiding overlap and duplication of effort; collecting qualitative and quantitative data to assess the impact of training programmes; and making concrete proposals to enhance the impact of United Nations training activities. UNITAR should be given the mandate to undertake that type of extensive survey.

30. His delegation supported the proposal made in paragraph 22 of the report regarding the establishment of a clearing house function. UNITAR should be provided with sufficient resources to prepare an electronic catalogue for that purpose.

31. The future policy directions for the training activities of the United Nations, outlined in section V of the report, were too general. More sector-specific directions, particularly the role of the United Nations in providing training in the use of information and communications technology, would have been preferable. He supported the ideas contained in document A/54/390. While expanding its focus on building alliances with universities, the Board might consider making UNITAR an institution which could link universities from the developed and developing countries and encourage them to offer joint courses through distance learning. Member States should ensure that there was a constant and increased flow of resources and continuity in the management of UNITAR.

32. Pakistan, which was committed to the role of the United Nations in providing training opportunities, particularly to developing countries, supported the activities of UNITAR and of the United Nations Staff College.

33. **Mr. Avramenko** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation welcomed the strengthening of the Institute and took note of the balanced approach it had taken in recent years in carrying out its many projects. In its view, UNITAR had the capability to respond to the highest priorities of Member States. Most of its activities were in the area of economic and social development, as the majority of its clients were developing countries. At the same time, he stressed the importance of implementing the provisions of resolution 53/195 concerning training programmes for countries with economies in transition and involving experts from those countries in the preparation of training materials. As a member of the Board of Trustees, the Russian Federation would make every effort to ensure that the work of UNITAR served the interests of Member States.

34. Turning to the progress report on the United Nations Staff College at Turin (A/54/481), he said that although it provided a general outline of the College's aims and activities, his delegation would have preferred a more analytical report including information on the effectiveness of the programmes, criteria for selection of staff and resources and expenses. His delegation believed that staff members should be allowed to receive further professional training free of charge. The question of the future status of

the Staff College should be discussed in detail at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

35. **Mr. Chave** (Observer for Switzerland), noting that his country had been providing financial support to the United Nations Staff College since its establishment, said that a more systematic evaluation would undoubtedly optimize the College's course offerings. Networking and coordination with training institutions within the United Nations system should be strengthened in order to avoid overlap. The training offered by the College could be extended to the main national partners of the United Nations system, including officials of non-governmental organizations and of the private sector. Certain courses would acquire greater relevance and efficiency if they were organized within the programme countries; consequently, the College's courses could be partially decentralized.

36. Noting that UNITAR had entered a new phase of consolidation after a period of restructuring, he hailed the Institute's cooperation with other partners such as the United Nations Population Fund, the International Labour Organization and the International Organization for Migration. Noting that UNITAR depended entirely on voluntary contributions, he urged Member States, especially the industrial countries and those that used the Institute's training programmes, to participate in its financing. Contributions were particularly needed for the General Fund in order to ensure the long-term development of the Institute and the viability of its programmes.

37. **Mr. Lewy** (Israel) welcomed the promotion of economic and social development to enhance peace and prosperity, noting that joint training and research programmes were essential to achieve that goal. His delegation hoped that UNITAR would help to promote regional cooperation through the branch of the United Nations University in Amman, for Jordan had done much to promote bridge-building in the region. UNITAR and the Blaustein Institute for Desert Research planned to establish a joint programme on global changes in the drylands. Israel would like to propose that similar joint training programmes be implemented with the assistance of UNITAR and the United Nations University; Israel would like to be part of such an initiative.

38. **Mr. Kerpens** (Suriname), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) said that CARICOM member States expressed their appreciation to the Executive Director of UNITAR and its staff for the excellent manner in which they had provided training courses on a variety of subjects.

39. Future topics for training courses offered at Headquarters should focus more on economic, financial, social and trade issues related to sustainable development. CARICOM would also welcome courses which strengthened the capacity of developing countries to participate more effectively in the work of the United Nations. More effort should be made to select experts from developing countries to prepare training materials and present the courses. The need for capacity-building was greatest among the developing countries, and thus UNITAR should tailor its activities to their benefit. It was appalling to hear that the largest beneficiaries of UNITAR activities included some of the richest Member States since, according to the Board of Trustees, many of those States were not contributing financially to UNITAR. He appealed to those countries to demonstrate their solidarity with developing countries by providing funds for UNITAR on a predictable basis.

40. The survey requested in General Assembly resolution 53/195 had revealed some interesting findings, and, since training should be regarded as a vital part of United Nations activities, CARICOM member States supported the view that the survey should be extended to include the United Nations system as a whole. UNITAR had indeed become an outstanding training facility, but its narrow financial base continued to be a source of concern. There was also some degree of duplication and overlap among the many training institutes in the United Nations system. CARICOM was of the view that, where UNITAR had demonstrated its comparative advantage, other funds and programmes should make use of its training services rather than rely on outside expertise.

41. CARICOM welcomed the relationship being developed between UNITAR and the private sector, as long as there was balanced participation from both developed and developing countries. It also would welcome the strengthening of the New York office; indeed, UNITAR should be provided with additional accommodation at Headquarters, including a small training and conference facility, to allow for small and spontaneous training events and follow-up for delegates.

42. Two main avenues seemed open for further cooperation between UNITAR and CARICOM. First, UNITAR could make a valuable contribution to the restructuring process under way within the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for Women (INSTRAW). Second, UNITAR might consider replicating in the Caribbean its training and institution-building programmes currently operating in the Pacific region with a view, in particular, to establishing a pool of trained personnel capable of assessing climate change vulnerability.

43. **Mr. Al-Hadid** (Jordan) said that in order to facilitate the work of the Institute and derive maximum benefit from it, the United Nations system at large must support UNITAR as the body responsible for providing training services to Member States free of charge. Such support might take the form of the provision of conference services and of exempting the Institute from the payment of rent for its offices in New York and maintenance charges for its Geneva office. It was also essential to find the Institute premises in New York with sufficient space for its various meetings and training courses.

44. It was important to improve coordination between the Institute and the relevant committees, and in particular the Second Committee. UNITAR courses relevant to Second Committee agenda items should not be scheduled at times which conflicted with the Committee's programme of work, particularly during the General Assembly.

45. The item on training and research should be considered before the annual United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities so that the Institute and other training and research bodies would have the opportunity to solicit the support of Member States for their worthy activities.

46. His delegation welcomed the progress report by the Director of the United Nations Staff College at Turin (A/54/481), which had stressed the need to focus attention on the most suitable arrangements to place the institution on a secure and stable footing in terms both of its status and of its financial basis.

47. Jordan was proud to serve as host in Amman to the International Leadership Academy of the United Nations University. The multiplicity of research and training institutions in the United Nations system highlighted the need for the coordination of efforts for the maximum benefit of Member States.

48. **Mr. Li Shijian** (China) said that the key to UNITAR reform had been the close cooperation between the Institute and other agencies. Despite its success, however, lack of resources remained a serious constraint. He appealed to States and institutions which had benefited from its programmes to contribute to UNITAR.

49. **Mr. Kitazawa** (Japan) said that, in the light of the importance of training, his delegation appreciated the many programmes offered by UNITAR, particularly in the area of capacity-building. As a major donor, Japan would continue to support UNITAR training programmes.

Draft resolution on the United Nations Staff College in Turin, Italy (A/C.2/54/L.26)

50. **Mr. Kääriäinen** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.26. The main purpose of the draft resolution was to request the Secretary-General to report to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the progress of the United Nations Staff College, based on a full evaluation of the activities undertaken by the College, and to make recommendations on the status of the College after its pilot phase.

51. *Mr. Niculescu (Romania), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

Agenda item 103: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (A/54/152-E/1999/92)

52. **Ms. McCaffery** (Regional Commissions, New York Office), introducing the report contained in document A/54/152-E/1999/92, said that the repercussions of the Israeli occupation had been pervasive and all-encompassing and had adversely affected the land, people, natural resources, environment, livelihoods, education, health, welfare, human rights, economic prospects and opportunities, rights of communities and the dignity of the human person. It was also a matter of deep concern that conditions in the occupied territories had worsened in 1998.

53. The people of the Middle East welcomed the prospects for peace following the recent general elections in Israel. However, until peace proved to be enduring and based on the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter, the issues before the Committee would continue to be very troubling both for the region and for the world.

54. **Mr. Jilani** (Observer for Palestine) said that the valuable information contained in the report clearly reflected the threat posed to the Middle East peace process by the Israeli policies of building and expanding settlements and expropriating land and water in a campaign which had reached serious proportions. It also reflected the damaging effects of such policies on the economic and social life of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories and the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan. In violation of international law and United Nations resolutions, Israel continued to plunder water from the occupied Arab territories for its own use at the expense of

the Palestinians. Moreover, despite the cautious optimism felt in the wake of the recent Israeli elections, the current Israeli Government persisted in activities such as wide-scale settlement expansion, the wholesale construction of new housing units and the expropriation of large areas of agricultural land in an attempt to present the world with a fait accompli with a view to determining the outcome of the peace process.

55. As long as that situation continued, the achievement of any real progress in the peace negotiations would prove impossible. Such practices clearly revealed Israel's intention of strengthening settlement in the occupied Palestinian territories and placing obstacles in the way of Israel's withdrawal from those territories with the aim of preventing the establishment of an independent Palestinian State which enjoyed full sovereignty over all Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem.

56. The resolution which the Committee adopted each year by an overwhelming majority reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Palestinian people and the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan to sovereignty over their natural resources, as well as the right of the Palestinian people to claim compensation for any plundering of those resources. He hoped that the issue of compensation would be addressed in the negotiations. No final solution could be achieved without respect for the principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and United Nations resolutions.

57. **Mr. Wehbe** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the report detailed further episodes in the suffering of the Palestinian people and the Syrian citizens living in the occupied Arab territories, leaving readers to draw the conclusion that Israel had taken retrograde steps in connection with the implementation of General Assembly resolution 53/196. It was patently evident that the illegitimate Israeli practices had exacerbated the structural imbalances in the economic, social and ecological environment of those occupied territories. Since 1967, Israel had seized 96 per cent of the Golan, having pursued a two-sided policy which targeted both land and people and aimed to isolate the Golan from its Syrian motherland and annex it to Israel.

58. Despite the ongoing peace process, which was based on the principle of applying the relevant Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace with a view to effecting Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories and the attainment of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, Israel continued to expand its settlement of the Golan. Israel's settlement activity was incompatible with any genuine peace effort; its attempts to alter the demographic and geographical facts in the occupied Arab territories, particularly Jerusalem, would simply thwart the achievement of any such peace. The Israeli settlement policy had been universally condemned as a breach of international law and a violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Clearly, peace was not an option as long as occupation and settlement expansion continued, together with the display of force and the killing of innocent civilians in southern Lebanon.

59. His country, by contrast, had always worked for the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace on the basis of the Madrid terms of reference. Progress towards resolving the Syrian and Lebanese aspects of the situation depended primarily on the genuine will of the Israeli Government to resume negotiations at the point where they were suspended, namely the undertaking made by the former Rabin Government to withdraw to the line of 4 June 1967. As universally acknowledged, the Golan was Syrian territory to which some half a million individuals were awaiting return. He therefore hoped that Israel would heed the warnings to grasp the opportunity for peace before it was too late.

60. **Mr. Aujali** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the report detailed the difficult conditions in which the Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories were living and the illegal practices of the occupation authorities in violation of the will of the international community and relevant Security Council resolutions. The occupying Power was using all of its civil, military, governmental and non-governmental institutions for purposes of expansion and settlement and for the exploitation of the resources of the occupied Arab territories and the destruction of their environment. Even worse, it was attempting to oppress the Arabs, deprive them of their rights, destroy their potential and exploit them.

61. The geographical distribution of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory was such that Palestinian communities were being surrounded in order to restrict their natural growth, and the occupation authorities were building bypass roads in all parts of the West Bank in order to perpetuate the occupation. The figures given in the report clearly demonstrated the frightening growth of the settlements in the occupied Arab territories, and the settlement policies being implemented by the occupation authorities represented defiance of the will of the international community.

62. Settlement activity was being stepped up in a number of ways, including the building of new settlements, the demolition of Palestinian dwellings and the expropriation of land. The report stated that during 1998 the occupation authorities had demolished 100 Palestinian homes in the

West Bank and 45 in East Jerusalem and that approximately 2 per cent of the area of the West Bank had been confiscated for the bypass roads constructed since January 1996.

63. The occupation continued to have repercussions on education, for school attendance had been affected by students being forced to pass through Israeli-controlled checkpoints and by other security restrictions. It had also had an adverse impact on health care, and drinking-water supplies to Palestinian communities in the West Bank had been cut during the summer in order to meet the increasing needs of the settlements. Environmental problems had been caused by the increasing quantities of waste produced by the expanding settlements.

64. As the occupation authorities were consolidating their presence in the Golan Heights, its Arab inhabitants were experiencing a further deterioration in their living conditions as a result of the restrictions imposed on employment and education and because of the burdensome taxation policy and growing unemployment.

65. The suffering of the Arabs under occupation would not cease until occupation itself was eliminated from all Arab territories. The international community must therefore endeavour to achieve that objective in an expeditious manner.

66. **Mr. Al-Muntasser** (Yemen) said that the report showed that, despite the agreements reached with the Palestinians, Israel was continuing to build settlements, to annex land and to displace the Palestinian inhabitants and demolish their homes. Since 1967 it had established more than 200 settlements, with a total of more than 375,000 settlers, in the occupied Arab territories. The building of settlements was depriving the original inhabitants of their arable land and perpetuating the occupation; moreover, it represented a continuation of the ongoing exploitation of natural resources.

67. In the Middle East, everyone had hoped that the Israeli occupation would end, together with the travails of the Palestinian people, before the end of the millennium. The current situation was destroying the hopes on which the peoples of the region had built their dreams for a just and comprehensive peace. Instead of halting the construction of settlements, Israel was accelerating the pace at which new settlements were being built. There had been 136 per cent more new housing starts in the West Bank in the first half of 1998 than in the same period in 1997. Israel was implementing huge building projects for the purpose of further expansion and the annexation of Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In 1998, more than 100 Palestinian homes had been demolished, arable land had been bulldozed and expropriated and olive trees belonging to Palestinian farmers had been uprooted. In the occupied Golan, Israel was engaging in practices that were incompatible with international law and with the Charter of the United Nations.

68. Israel must respect the will of the international community and must honour the agreements it had concluded with the Palestinian Authority in accordance with the principle of land for peace endorsed by the States of the region and welcomed by their peoples. The peoples of the region looked forward to a just and comprehensive peace that would allow Arabs and Israelis to utilize their natural resources and secure for future generations a safe and stable environment in which cooperation and peace would replace conflict and violence. Human capacities would then be freed to restore the region to its past status as a centre for the dissemination of civilization to all mankind.

69. **Mr. Al-Hadid** (Jordan) noted that, according to the report, by the end of 1999, more than 375,000 Israelis would be living in some 200 settlements in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights. The geographical distribution of settlements severely restricted the growth of Palestinian communities. They were either surrounded by settlements, or huge tracts of Palestinian land were being confiscated for future settlement expansion. That policy had also reduced the area of arable land available to Palestinians, leading to a corresponding reduction in the share of the agriculture sector in gross domestic product. The constant friction between settlers and Palestinians was a permanent source of provocation, conflict and instability.

70. Water was supplied to settlements at the expense of Palestinian communities; while Israel exploited ground water in a manner that might lead to its depletion, it created restrictions that prevented the Palestinians from meeting their own basic needs for water. Approximately 4.3 million cubic metres of waste-water was generated annually from settlements in the West Bank and much of it was dumped untreated on Palestinian land, creating a health hazard for Palestinian communities.

71. The report indicated that environmental regulations relating to soil, air and water quality in the West Bank had generally been far less comprehensive than those applied in Israel itself. Israel tended to overlook environmental violations committed in the occupied Palestinian territory, so that polluting industries had been relocated there.

72. Border closures had had a significant effect on trade and on the continuity and regularity of production, marketing, income generation and employment. The private sector had been reluctant to invest because of the continued

ambiguity of the legal and political situation, and Israel was continuing to hinder trade between the Palestinian economy and the neighbouring Arab countries in order to keep it in a state of subservience to the Israeli economy and to monopolize the Palestinian market.

73. In the occupied Syrian Golan, more settlements had been built and the number of settlers had increased. While incentives and investment continued to promote the Israeli presence, the Arab population faced a further deterioration in its living conditions as a result of Israeli restrictions on employment and education and of the Israeli taxation policy. Employment opportunities were limited to unskilled daily wage labour. In most cases, workers had no access to social benefits or health insurance and there were, of course, huge wage differentials between them and Israelis.

74. Jordan had done its best over the years to promote a lasting and comprehensive peace in the region so that the development and stability sought by all its peoples could replace the violence and instability from which the region had long suffered. It believed in the importance of achieving economic development for all the peoples of the region in order to promote peace, and it therefore called upon the international community to provide additional economic assistance and encourage foreign investment so as to rebuild the Palestinian economy and improve the living conditions of the Palestinian people.

75. Israel must halt the building or expansion of settlements; not only were these illegal but they constituted the major obstacle to peace and development. Jordan urged Israel to comply with the agreements concluded with the Palestinian Authority and, in particular, with the recent Sharm al-Sheikh Memorandum, which had been an important step forward.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.